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for Democracy and World Human Rights



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Press release

European Lawyers Delegation visits Diyarbakir

A delegation of European lawyers will visit Diyarbakir from 21st to 24th January 2016. The 13 participants come from Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Austria. Two European lawyers' organisations are supporting this initiative, the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH) and the European Democratic Lawyers (EDL) and also the "Unione delle Camere Penali Italiane"

ELDH and EDL are gravely concerned about the deterioration of human rights in the region which has escalated since the Turkish government stopped the peace negotiations with the Kurdish Workers Party PKK. For many weeks now a curfew has been imposed upon several towns in the region of Diyarbakir and Şırnak and upon a great part of the centre of Diyarbakir. The Turkish government boasts that it has killed several hundred PKK fighters. It fails to mention the civilians who have also died, in particular due to the use of heavy weapons by the Turkish army inside densely populated areas of several towns. On 28th November 2015 the President of the Diyarbakir Bar Association was killed on the street when he gave a press conference asking for a peaceful solution of the conflict. In press releases ELDH and EDL condemned the murder of Tahir Elçi and demanded an international independent investigation into the circumstances.

The former judge of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), Riza Türmen, who is now a CHP Member of Parliament, stated that the long-term military curfew constitutes a violation of state responsibility. Several victims of the curfew have complained to the ECtHR demanding an end to the military operations and the lifting of the curfew. Nevertheless the court ruled on 13th January 2016 that the evidence at its disposal was not sufficient for it to order interim measures. However the court asked the applicants to keep it informed of any further developments. Lastly, given the gravity of the situation, the Court indicated to the Government "to take any necessary steps to ensure that physically vulnerable individuals can have access to treatment if they so request".

The European lawyers visiting Diyarbakir are going to investigate

- the dimension and the character of the human rights violations
- civilian casualties
- the curfew, the number of concerned people, the impact of the curfew on the populations and if the government meets the demands of the ECtHR

The members of the delegation will talk to representatives of HDP, the Diyarbakir Bar Association, the Diyarbakir Chamber of Medicine, the Human Rights Association of Diyarbakir, a women's association, the family of Tahir Elçi, the families of victims. They will also talk to a lawyer who represents victims of the curfew in Diyarbakir before the European Court of Human Rights.

After their visit the lawyers will publish a report.

For more information, contact

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